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WASHINGTON, DC - Congressman Todd Akin (R-MO-2), Ranking Member of the House Armed Services Subcommittee on Seapower and Expeditionary Forces, today questioned Secretary of the Navy Ray Mabus and Chief of Naval Operations Admiral Gary Roughead about the possibility of a multi-year contract for F-18 Super Hornets and the looming strike fighter gap facing the Navy and Marine Corps. Video of the exchange is available on Congressman Akin's YouTube channel here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5G4Yldq-g-w>

In response to Akin's question, Secretary Mabus confirmed that the Navy is working to meet the March 1 deadline for notifying Congress of an intent to enter into a multi-year contract for F/A-18's. This agreement would save the Navy ten percent on its purchase from Boeing. Akin also expressed concern about the constantly changing size of the Navy's fighter shortfall and asked if the Navy was considering buying additional planes as one part of the mitigation strategy. Secretary Mabus deferred the question to ADM. Roughead, who also did not provide a clear answer.

Following the exchange, Akin commented on the F/A-18 multi-year agreement:

"I commend the Navy for working toward a multi-year purchase of F-18's. This has been one of my top priorities for the last few years, because it is good for the taxpayer and good for the Navy, and provides stability for the workforce. I hope that the Secretary of Defense will see the light and support a multi-year contract which will probably save over half a billion taxpayer dollars."

Akin also commented on the Navy strike fighter shortfall:

“The Navy’s strike fighter shortfall numbers are changing so much that I am beginning to wonder if a pair of dice are involved. Unfortunately, the Navy’s so-called mitigation strategies are nothing more than hope and prayer and unbudgeted programs. At the same time, either the Navy or the Secretary of Defense refuses to even consider buying additional planes to help address this shortfall. Today, Secretary Mabus punted the question to ADM. Roughead, who did his level best to not provide an answer to my question. This is very disappointing, and not what Americans expect out of the Pentagon.”

In a recent letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Akin encouraged the Department to seriously consider using a multi-year contract to purchase F/A-18E/F/G’s as it would likely save a half billion dollars of taxpayer money. In 2009, Akin offered an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act which provided the Navy the legal authority to enter into a multi-year contract. Akin has also repeatedly expressed concerns about the strike fighter gap facing the Department of the Navy.

Watch Congressman Akin’s exchange with Secretary Gates on this issue from February 3, 2010 here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fctPquWtSvM> .

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